

Message Text

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SUBJECT: KOREA AGREES LIMIT TUNA SALES TO JAPAN

REF: SEOUL 2892

SUMMARY: KOREA AND JAPAN REACH AGREEMENT ON LIMITING KOREAN SALES OF DEEP-FROZEN TUNA TO JAPAN TO LEVEL OF 45,000 MT FOR CY 1975.

THIS COMPARES ACTUAL 1973 KOREAN EXPORTS TO JAPAN OF 37,000 MT FOR ALL TYPES OF TUNA. WHILE NOT HAPPY WITH HAVING QUANTITATIVE LIMIT, KOREAN'S NOT UNDULY CONCERNED WITH LIMIT AT LEVEL NEGOTIATED. END SUMMARY.

1. VISIT TO SEOUL JUNE 25-27 BY JAPANESE DEL HEADED BY TAKOMI ETOH, GOJ VICE-MINISTER, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY, PRODUCED ROK-GOJ AGREEMENT THAT KOREA WILL RESTRAIN TUNA SALES TO JAPAN TO LIMIT OF 45,000 METRIC TONS FOR CY 1975. ACCORDING TO ROK OFFICE OF FISHERIES (OFA), WHICH HANDLED NEGOTIATIONS FOR ROK,

AGREEMENT COVERS DEEP-FROZEN TUNA FOR SALE AS RAW FISH ONLY AND UNCLASSIFIED

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DOES NOT COVER TUNA SALES FOR CANNING. HOWEVER, FORMER CATEGORY CONSTITUTES GREAT BULK OF KOREAN TUNA SALES TO JAPAN.

2. AS EXPLAINED BY OFA, DEEP FREEZING PROCESS USED TO PRESERVE

TUNA FOR THIS PURPOSE IF RELATIVELY RECENT DEVELOPMENT PIONEERED BY JAPANESE. PROFIT MARGINS ON THESE SALES APPARENTLY CURRENTLY MUCH BETTER THAN RETURNS IN DEPRESSED MARKET FOR TUNA FOR CANNING. KOREAN SALES OF DEEP FORZEN TUNA TO JAPAN HAVE BEEN RISING RAPIDLY PROVOKING CONSIDERABLE REACTION FROM JAPANESE FISHING INDUSTRY. SITUATION COMPLICATED BY FACT THERE SUBSTANTIAL JAPANESE FINANCING OF KOREAN FISHING VESSELS IN THIS TRADE.

3. VESSELS INVOLVED ARE SO-CALLED "INDEPENDENT TRIP" VESSELS AS OPPOSED TO VESSELS OPERATING FROM OFF-SHORE BASES TO SUPPLY CANNING FACTORIES, E.G. AS IN AMERICAN SAMOA. MOST VESSELS HAVE BEEN CALLING DIRECTLY IN JAPANESE PORTS TO OFF-LOAD CATCHES. UNDER INFORMAL AGREEMENT REACHED IN MARCH THIS YEAR (SEE REFTTEL), KOREANS, AGREED, IN PRINCIPLE, TO TRY TO REDUCE INSTANCES OF FISHING VESSELS OFF-LOADING CATCHES IN JAPAN, BUT AGREEMENT HAD LITTLE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE AS KOREANS HAVE VERY FEW CARRIERS FOR OFF-LOADING CATCHES ELSEWHERE FOR TRANSPORTATION TO JAPAN, A FACT GOJ WAS WELL AWARE OF. BASED ON REPORTS AVAILABLE HERE, JAPANESE DIET, UNDER PRESSURE FROM FISHING INDUSTRY, RECENTLY AMENDED PERTINENT LEGISLATION CONCERNING SUCH DIRECT OFF-LOADING FROM FISHING VESSELS. ROK AGREEMENT ON QUANTITATIVE LIMIT SUPPOSEDLY INTENDED TO FORESTALL IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH REGULATIONS WHICH APPARENTLY COULD BE USED TO PROHIBIT THIS PRACTICE.

4. ROK ENTERED LATEST NEGOTIATION WITH PROPOSAL FOR LIMIT OF 55,000 MT WITH GOJ COUNTERING WITH 35,000 MT PROPOSAL. ACCORDING OFA, COMPROMISE OF 45,000 MT LIMIT COMPARES TO ACTUAL 1973 TUNA EXPORTS OF ALL TYPES TO JAPAN OF 37,000 MT. AGREEMENT APPLIES ONLY TO CY 1975 WITH BOTH SIDES AGREEING TO REVIEW SITUATION RE FUTURE AT LATER DATE.

5. COMMENT: JUDGING FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH BOTH OFA OFFICIALS AND INDUSTRY SOURCES, IT IS EMBASSY'S IMPRESSION THAT, WHILE KOREANS CERTAINLY NOT HAPPY OVER HAVING TO AGREE TO QUANTITATIVE LIMIT, THEY ARE NOT UNDULY CONCERNED WITH LIMIT AT LEVEL NEGOTIATED.
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